



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Milwaukee County
CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

For Immediate Release:

DATE: February 14, 2016

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Milwaukee County's Approach to Mental Health Reform is a National Success Story

MILWAUKEE – For more than 20 years, Milwaukee County has been serving children and families with mobile crisis response services. In 2014, amid concerns about increased violence in the city of Milwaukee and escalating tensions between the police and the community, Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele encouraged a partnership between the County and the City to launch a pilot program in Milwaukee Police Department District 7 that funded a highly specialized team pairing police officers from the City with clinicians from the County.

In a series of interviews spanning several months, *Buzzfeed* documented the work of Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division clinicians Tai Hooper and Hendriel Anderson working on the Trauma-informed Response Team in District 7, where they are addressing the needs of children and family members who have witnessed or have been victimized by violence.

From the article: *"Through TRT, Anderson and Hooper are reaching clients in communities where street violence is common, and who may not connect the dots that they could benefit from outside support. Often when TRT is summoned, the incident that got the police's attention wasn't the only traumatic experience that that person was dealing with."*

Read more [here](#).

Last year, the city and county decided to expand the partnership into police District 5 in Milwaukee to begin in early 2017.

"Our person-centered, trauma-informed approach to providing compassionate mental health care directly in our communities is helping to reduce stigma and leading to better outcomes," Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele said. "For years, our system was broken and didn't put people first. Today we are fast on our way to becoming a model system of care, informed by data and national best practices. Our reforms aren't done yet but we're already making a difference in Milwaukee County."

In addition to running the Trauma Response Teams, Milwaukee County provides training for the Milwaukee Police Department and other local law enforcement agencies to help them learn how to respond to Emergency Detention calls where individuals are experiencing mental health crises. This training reduces negative interactions between individuals with mental illness and law enforcement while reducing the need for involuntary care. Four to seven County staff conduct approximately 10 to 15 trainings per year.

The County also utilizes Crisis Mobile Teams bringing resources to individuals in crisis, rather than requiring them to come to treatment locations. Seven days a week, 24 hours per day, these resources are available. One extension of this is our Crisis Assessment Response Team, or CART, which pairs clinicians with police officers. When CART intervenes, 85 percent of the time clients are diverted to appropriate supportive services as an alternative to incarceration or involuntary detention. CART has played a major role in reducing emergency room detentions by 50 percent, compared to 2011.

Our mobile response also includes crisis intervention services and community supports for families caring for children who have complex behavioral health needs. This includes runaway situations, parent-child conflicts, emotional crisis, mental health incidences, and even children affected by violent crime. When a crisis occurs, our clinicians respond immediately by phone and are able to meet with the youth at home, school or at the scene of an incident.

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